

AUG - 6 2004

-----Original Message-----; From: Darla Horn [mailto:postmeiska@usadatanet.net]

Sent: Friday, July 16, 2004 1:23 AM

To: KJMWEB

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

Subject: Widescreen - Letterbox; I have been sending the below letter to broadcasters and now feel it needs to be addressed by our legislators and organizations that defend the rights of average Americans. Although I appreciate that there are many issues much more pressing, I feel this issue has slid under the radar because of that. Millions of Americans are having their right to choose how they watch television usurped by an industry that insists on pushing letterbox format as the new choice for tv broadcasting. Cloaked under the high definition mandate, letterbox format is insidiously creeping quickly throughout television programing. With no thought as to how this affects people with vision impairment, how it shrinks the viewing screen 20%, how it can cause 'burn in' to tv's or how millions of Americans will afford new wide screen televisions, producers are unilaterally making the decision to show their product in letterbox format. This is especially difficult for those who can only afford to have smaller televisions. Imagine watching letterbox on a 13" tv. Before formats have even been settled on...16:9 or 14:9... for example, producers are rushing to push letterbox on the market hoping they will force Americans to accept this as an inevitable fate. To seal this, they have not encouraged the production of conversion boxes so that people would have a choice to watch programing in standard 4:3 format or wide screen. My husband, an electrical engineer, worked in a television tube manufacturing facility and says this would not be hard to do. Television, among so many other public services, have been regulated in so many ways over the years. Regulations that were intended to protect the industry as well as the consumer. Why is the FCC sitting idly by while millions of Americans are being forced into watching a format that is not supported by the vast majority of televisions now in use and still being sold?;

*****; "Two years ago I purchased a 32" television as my vision had been damaged by an illness and a larger viewing screen was helpful. In the last year, many of my favorite television programs have gone to letterbox format and like a virus it is spreading. The ones that broadcast in 16:9 format I can convert to 4:3 using my Ultimate TV satellite receiver although the images are stretched. However, 14:9 format can not be stretched and I lose 1/4 of my viewing area due to the blackened border. Not only is this a physical problem to me, but the more programming I view in this format, the more likely it will cause a 'burn in' area on that portion of my television. I am not interested in supporting some directors vision of how they wish me to view their production. This should be my choice, especially where it concerns my health, my enjoyment and the protection of my equipment. (High Def TV does not have to be letter boxed-wide screen.) It is especially ridiculous when it is done for commercials. What special panoramic vision is being projected here? At the very least, broadcasters should offer equipment that could be purchased by the customer to change the aspect ratios to fit the television equipment or taste of it's subscribers. To force us to watch smaller images on standard televisions to meet some artistic ideal is at the very best inconsiderate and at it's worst, shows a blatant disregard for the affect this has on the average viewer. Unless Hollywood, television manufacturers and television programming providers intend to supply free letter box televisions to all Americans in this country, it is highly offensive for them to force feed us letter box programming. I can honestly say this has ruined my television viewing experience. It's like looking through a mail slot. I no longer get engrossed in programming. It all seems very artificial ... like watching the coming attractions ... not the main feature. So, please explain how these producers supposed visions are enhancing my viewing pleasure by subjecting me to black bars above and below their wide screened creations! The television/movie industry is dictating a major change to millions of American households with no thought or concern as to how they will physically or financially deal with it. The change to High Definition was a shock ... wide screen is an insult." And please do not tell me I am getting more information on my screen....not when my viewing area is 20% less!; Darla Horn; 4199 Bills Rd.; Corning, NY 14830

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